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ABSTRACT

Issues in the future of a federal collaborative program, Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD), are discussed in this paper. Problems attributed to LEAD are its antagonistic posture to educational administration programs in higher education and political conflicts of interest. Methodology involved analysis of successful LEAD applications from the U.S. Department of Education. Other criticisms of LEAD include its negative effect on enrollment in university programs; its business-oriented management; assessment practices that contribute to sexual and racial discrimination; an anti-intellectual stance; and lack of research. The recommendation is made for supporting higher education administrator preparation programs. (LMI)

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Where will LEAD lead?
An Update on my LEAD research
As Presented at the
National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration
Convention at the University of Alabama, August 13-18, 1989

Louis Wildman

For those not acquainted with LEAD, that acronym stands for Leadership in Educational Administration Development--a federal program, just completing its 2nd year. $14.3 million has been spent to date. Hunter Moorman, Director of the program for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, projects expenditures of $35 million over the life of the project. (Kansas State Educational Considerations, p. 3) There are now 57 LEAD centers--one in every state, the District of Columbia and in some U.S. territories.

I think that it is most unfortunate that this large federal program came into being with an antagonistic posture to educational administration programs in colleges and universities. We run our programs with virtually no federal dollars. We subsidize our own research expenses. Except for small travel allowances, we pay our own way to conferences, including transportation, housing, and registration fees. And while there are many legitimate complaints about the quality of educational administration programs, without sufficient funding I am surprised higher education programs have done as well as they have. Having been a school district superintendent before coming to California State University, I had no idea that I would have to pay so much out of my own pocket, and then at a salary equivalent to that of an assistant high school principal. Unfortunately, LEAD was born without an appreciation of these problems.

Right in the Application For Grants (USDOE, Dec. 5, 1986), applicants were told that

> Criticism of college and university preservice preparation is widespread. Much of this training is widely believed to be out of touch with reality--irrelevant, out of date, abstract, and impractical. Many efforts to remedy this situation through inservice training are underway, but their effects are likely to fall short of what is needed. Many such programs lack depth and continuity. . . . Insufficient resources limit the amount of training that can be offered. . . . Current training and selection practices tend to overlook . . . many capable potential leaders outside the traditional educational system. As a result of these circumstances, many administrators are now ill-prepared for the contemporary demands of school leadership, and current training practices are unlikely to supply enough able leaders to meet future needs. (Application, p. 2)

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Notice that LEAD officials with the U.S. Office of Education agreed that "insufficient resources limit the amount of training that can be offered," but rather than provide those resources to help educational administration departments, LEAD took the position that

> The LEAD training and technical assistance centers will respond to these problems and opportunities in educational administration by building upon the growing understanding of effective school leadership and extending existing efforts in the States to develop effective administrator skills. (Application, p. 2)

In advising applicants, LEAD told them to "review pertinent literature," the "purpose" being "to inform the applicant's perceptions of problems and needs" and "guide [the applicant's] thinking about how best to develop a program." (Application, p. 12) [Notice that with that kind of advice, it is no wonder the applications were written from that perspective. But then Hunter Moorman, writing in the Spring 1989 issue of the Kansas State University College of Education publication titled Educational Considerations (p. 4) seems to take what is written in the applications as further confirmation of his asked for views:

> Center grant applications recapitulated the common litany of problems: university preparation is out of date, not germane to the demands of practice, abstract and theoretical, lacking a coherent framework related to the leadership role, self-selected, prone to reward credit over competence . . .

Thus, our efforts in higher education were severely criticized; our programs were seen as an irremedial road block to reform; and LEAD training and technical assistance centers, based upon the effective school research, were seen as needed throughout the United States. And this perspective continues to pervade the views of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Until recently, I was not aware of the extent to which AASA had been lobbying for greater control of the preparation of educational administrators. Evidently there was an original bill that would have funded internships for administrators in "businesses and effective schools." (Kansas State Educational Considerations, p. 12) (Also as an aside: it is interesting to me that when LEAD people talk about businesses they don't say "effective businesses." Businesses are assumed to be "effective," despite our trade deficit, the savings and loan management scandel, etc.)

In any event, when I called Bruce Hunter, AASA lobbyist, and asked him how LEAD got started, he told me that Sen. Chafee and Rep. Petri were impressed by the effective schools research, and that he and the two legislators felt that "the best training does not take place in any one setting." What he meant, of course, was that they didn't want a program for schools of education, and this was recently confirmed in an article by Edward Larson writing about the "History" of this legislative proposal (Kansas State Educational Considerations, p. 11)--quoting Rep. Petri.

But when the applications were submitted, they were received from "nearly all state administrator associations" (Kansas Ed. Com., p. 15) and LEAD officials had a problem, which Hunter Moorman says they delt with as follows:

> One of the program's concerns at this stage was to ensure prospective competitors that the competition was not, in the terminology used to indicate an ostensibly open but fraudulent competition, "wired." Apparently because of the aggressive "strategic interaction" the administrator and board associations had conducted, some other prospective applicants began to assume that the funds were "intended" for these association members. This was not so, and it was important that we disabuse the field of this notion. Program staff took every occasion to portray the competition as completely open and fair and to encourage any interested applicant to apply. (Kansas Ed. Com., p. 21)

And it is true that thirteen universities did then receive grants. But what I found interesting was who LEAD officials had selected as "peer reviewers:"

A few peer reviewers were college and university professors of educational administration, but to the best of my knowledge, most were not. Since I was only able to obtain a list of names and addresses, it was difficult to determine what their affiliations were, but I didn't recognize their names as having written widely in the professional literature. The list includes such people as David M. Holbrook of Holbrook Real Estate, Inc.; Kenneth R. Rossano, Director of External Affairs for the Bank of Boston; and Ms. Barbara Gothard who works for Burger King. I doubt whether these people would consider themselves experts in our field.

The politics of this program is frightening: the legislation didn't get any democratic support because the democrats aren't very interested in administrators. The republicans supported it because it looked like an opportunity to improve student achievement by training school administrators like business executives. And LEAD got added to a pork barrel bill in the middle of the night, with something for every state. In Hunter Moorman's own words:

> The bill was enacted without hearings, committee discussion, or substantial floor debate. (Kansas Ed. Com., p. 18)
> . . .
> In ways largely hidden to the public, a piece of public policy had become law and taken a major step toward implementation as an operating program. (Kansas Ed. Com., p. 19)

Now, whereas last year at this time our NCPEA decided not to have a lobbying effort in Washington, D.C.; already by January 1988, the Kraft Corporation and the U.S. Department of Education formed a unique partnership called the National LEADership Network, which is really a lobbying effort for LEAD programs. To quote the words of Elizabeth Hale, Co-Director of this National LEADership Network:

> In January 1988, the Institute for Educational Leadership joined in a unique partnership--with an agency of the federal government, the U.S. Department of Education, and with a major coporation, Kraft, Inc.--to develop and support a network among the federally funded LEAD Centers. (Kansas State Educational Considerations, p. 67)

According to Ms. Hale, the National LEADership Network, "uses its base in Washington, D.C., to stay abreast of education policy trends and issues." (p. 67) Among their activities, according to Ms. Hale, the National LEADership Network will support "the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, on behalf of LEAD Centers in Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington" to work toward "institutionalizing the LEAD Centers' role as agents for change and improvement in the process of developing educational leaders." (Kansas Ed. Com., p. 68)

While she does not come right out and use the word "lobbying," this is clearly a lobbying effort supported by the federal government in behalf of a government program. Undoubtedly, federal tax dollars are being channeled from the U.S. Office of Education, through this unnecessary coordinating organization (the National LEADership Network), channeled further through another quasi-federal agency (the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory), to support LEAD programs. If this were not a lobbying effort there would be no need for a "coordinating organization." The U.S. Office of Education should do all of the legitimate coordinating for these LEAD programs.

The fundamental reality is that the market model doesn't work very well in education. The Northwest Regional Laboratory has faced the same problem as these LEAD programs will increasingly face. They desperately try to get business from financially strapped school districts to maintain themselves. In the case of the Northwest Regional Laboratory, many of the districts in Alaska have been able to hire them. But when I was a superintendent in the State of Washington, my district couldn't afford to hire them if we had wanted to. Furthermore, their services weren't very good. If you have to continually provide enough educational services in order to pay your way, you don't have time to perform significant research to maintain the quality of those educational services.

But let me now return to my research on LEAD. I envy this National LEADership Network in one sense: according to Elizabeth Hale, "The ongoing relationship between the Department of Education LEAD Project Officers and the LEAD Centers gave the Network ready access to information about each Center program." (Kansas Ed. Com., p. 67) My research on LEAD, on the other hand, has been admittedly limited by what telephone interviews I could conduct and what printed material I could obtain. My primary sources were copies of the LEAD applications from the successful grantees, obtained after considerable difficulty through the Freedom of Information Act from the U.S. Department of Education. I was not given "ready access to information about each Center program."

Even after being forced to utilize the Freedom of Information Act and spending $375 for copies of these applications, I was amazed to find, upon their arrival that portions--particularly the budgets--had been deleted from the copies I obtained. This obviously is of considerable concern to me as a university researcher and taxpayer. I doubt that there are "Robin HUD's" in the U.S. Office of Education, but I don't like the fact that these officials are not forthcoming with an accounting of where the money is being spent. A very real concern is the degree to which it has gone to private consultants, when there are many university professors of educational administration along with their graduate students who would have been glad to provide many services for very small fees.

One of the requirements for LEAD applicants was that they show "matching contributions." Edward Larson of the University of Georgia states that Hunter Moorman "assured us that established projects proven to provide practical leadership skills to school administrators could easily secure continuing funding from foundations and businesses." (Kansas State Educational Considerations, p. 12) However, those of us who have attempted to find that "easily secured continuing funding" have found that it is not so "easy" to find, and I suspect that these LEAD programs didn't find it so easy, either. But then, I don't know because I have not been able to see the budgets for these LEAD centers.

Another financial concern to all of us is the degree to which we must bend our standards in order to survive. Even well established private institutions of higher education find this problem particularly troublesome. While the public institutions are a little more protected, student ADA is vital to maintaining a program. Student ADA in fact subsidizes, not only our teaching, but also our research and service work.

As I have already implied, one of the major problems I see with LEAD is that it siphons off our students. Much of what LEAD administrators must do is market and administrate their program. They don't have time for research. They are very busy trying to keep these LEAD programs going, which directly depend upon their appeal to their customers. It is very difficult to uphold or raise standards--let alone engage in long range research--when you need clients.

It is also very difficult to maintain a stable program. This lack of stability was quickly apparent to me when I telephoned a sample of 24 LEAD programs this past June. Over half of them (58%) had new leadership since the previous year.

Only 3 of the 24 LEAD programs had engaged in any research in educational administration, and all 3 of those were headquartered at universities.

At this point I think you have enough of the picture to step back and take a broader look at the "business-style management" model which is so reveared by the founders of LEAD. Anyone examining the recent history of the American machine-tool industry would see the parallel between the finding that only 3 of 24 LEAD programs are engaging in any research and the decline of that industry.

There is an excellent new book out called Made in America, published by M.I.T. and written by a sizeable number of its faculty in business and engineering. The book chronicles how, by following the leadership of executives trained in economics and finance, we have lost to the international competition in the automobile industry, the consumer-electronics industry, the machine-tool industry, the steel industry, and the textile industry. And this is the kind of leadership we need in education?! A few weeks ago it was announced that our balance of trade deficit rose from 9 to over 10 billion dollars for the month of May.

Another recent book by Harvard Business School Professor Abraham Zaleznik titled The Managerial Mystique begins in this way:

> Business in America has lost its way, adrift in a sea of managerial mediocrity, desperately needing leadership to face worldwide economic competition. Once the dominant innovator in technology, marketing, and manufacturing, American business has lost ground to foreign competition. Our smokestack industries such as stell have been decimated. The machine tool industry, crucial to increased productivity, has fallen behind Japanese and European competition. Consumer electronics producers have lost the race for dominance.
>
> The dimensions of the decline are staggering. . . Throughout the 1970s the United States lost world trade market share measured in dollar value. Since 1980 the loss in market share has continued, measured both in physical volume of product and in dollar value. In terms of productivity gain the United States ranks last. . .
>
> The causes of this decline in competitiveness are complex, but at the forefront is the attitude of American management.

In comparison, the higher education system in this country is unsurpassed throughout the world. My point here is that LEAD ought not be so quick to follow the corporate "managerial mystique" model and dismiss the ideals of higher education.

LEAD's purpose was

> to improve the level of student achievement in elementary and secondary schools through the enhancement of the leadership skills of school administrators by establishing technical assistance centers for each State to promote the development of the leadership skills of elementary and secondary school administrators with particular emphasis upon increasing access for minorities and women to administrative positions (U.S. Congress, 1984) (Kansas Ed. Com., p. 3)

In the time remaining, I would like to talk about just the last portion of that purpose: namely what Congress requested--"particular emphasis upon increasing access for minorities and women to administrative positions." It turns out that one of the principle components of LEAD actually discriminates on the basis of race and sex.

Approximately 30% of the LEAD centers include or are directly associated with administrator assessment centers. And most LEAD centers assessing prospective administrators for certification or selection purposes utilize the National Association of Secondary School Principals' (NASSP) assessment model.

I was amazed to find that an NASSP publicity brochure "Searching for Excellence?" proudly states that assessment centers were "first developed by the German military!"

But be that as it may, I was much more concerned after studying the document, Criterion-Related and Content Validity of the NASSP Assessment Center, which the NASSP gives out in support of its procedures. The report concludes that "the content validity of the assessment center as judged by the assessor-administrator experts is good," but the statistics provided don't support the procedure.

In my paper I talk about some of these problems, but here let me sight just two:

First of all, in reference to race and sex, on page 11 the report states that

> Significant differences between male and female condidates are observed on Judgment, Educational Values, Oral Communication, and Written Communication. Without exception, female candidates received higher consensus ratings than male candidates on those dimensions.

100% is a very high rate of discrimination!

Furthermore,

> White candidates received significantly higher mean consensus ratings than non-white candidates on Problem Analysis, Judgment, Decisiveness, Leadership, Written Communications, Organizational Ability and the placement recommendation.

Discrimination on the basis of race and sex is a very serious problem with the use of this testing procedure.

Finally let me quote a finding from this report that in a very deep way symbolizes the anti-intellectualism that seems to pervade LEAD. This is the finding that, according to this study of the use of the NASSP assessment procedure, "personal motivation," "range of interests," and "education values" "may not be related to the job performance of principals." This finding cuts directly against the ideals of higher education, and yet it is so consistent with the foundation of LEAD.

Again, I submit that even the foremost CEO's would not agree with that finding. Roger Smith, CEO at General Motors, has written a fine chapter in a recent book called Educating Managers: Executive Effectiveness Through Liberal Learning, in which he points out the failures of the "prescriptive" effectiveness movement and argues for "personal motivation," greater "range of interests" on the part of executives, and essentially "educational values."

While certainly LEAD has stimulated new cooperation and respect between professional associations state departments of education, school districts and universities, I think that we have got to continue making the case for the higher education preparation and development of educational administrators as strongly as we can--asking other players in the educational profession to support us as we continue to support them. The educational needs of this country are too great to spend so much time fighting inter-professional battles.